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Steps to advance the Middle East peace process and to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East

Report submitted by China

China has always closely followed the development of the situation in the Middle East, attached importance to advancing the Middle East peace process and actively supported the efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In accordance with provisions of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, China hereby submits its report on the steps it has taken to advance the Middle East peace process and to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

I. China supports and is committed to bilateral and multilateral efforts in advancing the Middle East peace process

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has always closely followed the development of the Middle East situation and worked vigorously to promote and facilitate the Middle East peace process. China has advocated peace and talks through bilateral and multilateral channels and by various means, urging Arab countries and Israel to resolve their territorial disputes through political negotiations, and has played a unique role in promoting the Middle East peace process.

1. Actively working with Palestine and Israel through bilateral channels

In recent years, China has kept intensive exchanges and communications with countries in the Middle East to vigorously promote resolution of disputes of the relevant parties in the region through peaceful dialogues.

During high-level exchanges between China and relevant Middle East countries, the Chinese leaders attach great importance to the Middle East peace process and other important issues bearing on the peace and stability of the region. They have extensively exchanged views with various parties and worked on relevant countries while taking into consideration their specific concerns.

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In May 2007, Chairman Wu Bangguo of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress visited Egypt. In June 2008, Vice-President Xi Jinping visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Yemen. In December 2008, Vice Premier Li Keqiang visited Egypt and Kuwait. In February 2009, President Hu Jintao visited Saudi Arabia. In June 2009, He Guoqiang, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Chinese Communist Party, visited Egypt and Jordan. In November 2009, Premier Wen Jiabao visited Egypt and the Headquarters of the League of Arab States. In the same month, Vice Premier Hui Liangyu visited the Syrian Arab Republic. In March 2010, Vice Premier Hui Liangyu visited Israel and Palestine.

In January 2007, Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert visited China. In July 2007, Deputy Prime Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic Abdullah Al-Dardari visited China. In October 2007, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel Tzipi Livni visited China. In November 2007 and September 2008, King Abudullah II of Jordan visited China. In April 2009, Speaker of the People's Assembly of the Syrian Arab Republic Mahmoud al-Abrash visited China. In February 2010, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Strategic Affairs of Israel Moshe Ya'alon visited China.

Various ministries of the Chinese Government have also carried out intensive exchanges with their counterparts in the Middle East. In late November and early December 2008, Liu Yunshan, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, member of the Secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party and head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee, visited Egypt, Palestine and Israel. In April and September 2009, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Jordan. In May 2009, State Councillor and Minister of Public Security Meng Jianzhu visited Jordan. In January 2010, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited Saudi Arabia.

In June 2007, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian National Authority Ziad Abu-Amr visited China. In November 2008, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit visited China. In October 2009, Chairman of the Israeli Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Tzachi Hanegbi visited China.

Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi has, on various occasions, exchanged views with leaders or foreign ministers of Middle East countries on the Middle East issue through telephone calls and exchanges of letters. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also held political consultations with its counterparts from the United States, the Russian Federation, France and relevant Middle East countries on the Middle East issue and other hotspot issues in the region.

China continues to render assistance to Palestine within its capability. In December 2007, China announced that it would provide 80 million renminbi in non-reimbursable assistance to Palestine from 2008 to 2010. During the Gaza conflicts in late 2008 and early 2009, China provided the Palestinian National Authority with $1 million in emergency humanitarian aid in cash. In its official assistance to Palestine, China has provided medical equipment and office utilities, implemented training programmes for a large number of personnel and carried out construction projects. In 2007 and 2008, China provided $500,000 in cash and donated 5 million renminbi in kind for the reconstruction of Palestine refugee camp in Nahr al-Bared through the Lebanese Government.

2. Actively promoting peace and dialogues in multilateral forum

In May 2007, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi attended the Conference of International Compact with Iraq in Egypt and put forward a four-point proposal on the implementation of the compact. During the Conference, he also met with representatives from various participating parties.

In November 2007, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi attended the Annapolis Conference on the Middle East issue. He put forward a five-point proposal: keeping peace talks on the right track; committing to peace talks; creating an environment conducive to peace talks; consolidating foundations for peace talks; and enhancing support for peace talks.

China has actively participated in conferences and programmes on the Middle East issue in such multilateral frameworks of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. China supports the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People of the General Assembly and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Since March 2006, the Chinese Government has sent six batches of peacekeeping forces to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). China's engineering battalion and medical team have been commended by UNIFIL for their outstanding performance in peacekeeping operations in Lebanon.

In June 2009, the sixth meeting of Senior Officials of the China-Arab Cooperation Forum was held in Beijing. Diplomats from 22 member States of the Arab League and officials from the secretariat of the Arab League attended the meeting. The two sides held political consultations on the Middle East peace process and other issues.

3. Using the mechanism of special envoy to actively participate in international efforts to promote peace in the Middle East

In July 2007, Sun Bigan, Chinese Special Envoy on the Middle East Affairs, visited Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Palestine, and held in-depth exchange of views on the situation in the Middle East with relevant parties. In December, on behalf of Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, Special Envoy Sun Bigan attended the International Donors Conference for the Palestinian State in Paris. He announced that China would donate 80 million renminbi to Palestine from 2008 to 2010. The Special Envoy also visited Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic after the Conference.

In March 2008, as representative of Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, Special Envoy Sun Bigan attended the twentieth Summit of the Arab League held in Damascus, and visited Saudi Arabia. In May, the Special Envoy attended the Palestine Investment Conference held in Bethlehem, Palestine, and visited Egypt and the Russian Federation. In July, the Special Envoy attended the new Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership Ministerial Conference on Capacity-Building for Palestine held in Jakarta.

In January 2009, Special Envoy Sun Bigan visited Egypt, Israel and Palestine to work on relevant parties concerning the Gaza conflicts. In March, the special envoy attended the Donors Conference on Gaza Reconstruction held in Sharm El-Sheikh,

Egypt, announcing that China would donate 15 million renminbi to Palestine for the reconstruction of schools that were destroyed during the Gaza conflicts. In March, Ambassador Wu Sike succeeded Ambassador Sun Bigan as Chinese Special Envoy on Middle East affairs. In June, Special Envoy Wu Sike visited Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and the Russian Federation. In July, the Special Envoy visited Qatar, Algeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In January 2010, Special Envoy Wu Sike visited Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and exchanged views with relevant parties on the situation in Palestine, Israel and the Middle East.

4. Expounding Chinese positions on the Middle East issue through leaders' speeches, Foreign Ministry's press conferences and briefings, and advocating a political settlement of the Middle East issue

In November 2009, Premier Wen Jiabao delivered a speech at the headquarters of the Arab League, expounding China's position on a peaceful settlement of the Middle East issue.

In April 2009, after his visit to Egypt, Palestine, Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency, elaborated China's position on promoting the Middle East peace process. In October, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun was interviewed on the Arabic-language channel of China Central Television.

II. China supports efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East

China has always believed that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones contributes to preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons and strengthening the international non-proliferation regime. China has always supported the efforts of countries in various regions to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of consultations among themselves and voluntary agreements, in the light of actual regional conditions. China also advocates that nuclear-weapon States commit themselves to supporting efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, respecting the status of such zones and undertaking corresponding obligations.

In the Middle East region, where the political and security situation is complicated, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone is of special significance in efforts to ease the tensions of the regional situation and to maintain regional peace, security and stability. China has always actively supported relevant initiatives proposed by countries in the Middle East and has voted for all the resolutions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East adopted by the General Assembly every year since 1974. China believes that the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is of great importance and should be implemented effectively and earnestly at an early date. China appreciates the efforts of relevant countries in the region in this regard and calls on the international community to adopt more active measures to promote the implementation of the resolution.

China believes that, in order to promote the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and strengthen the international non-proliferation regime, Israel should accede to the Treaty at an early date as a non-nuclear-weapon State and place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of IAEA. Accordingly, China voted for the resolution on Israel's nuclear capabilities proposed by Arab countries at the fifty-third General Conference of IAEA held in September 2009. China also believes that relevant countries in the region should sign and ratify the IAEA safeguards agreements as soon as possible, and encourages them to accept the Additional Protocol to the safeguards agreements.

China always maintains that the nuclear issue in the Islamic Republic of Iran should be solved in a peaceful manner through diplomatic negotiations. To that end, China calls on parties concerned to enhance diplomatic efforts and actively pursue a long-term, comprehensive and proper solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. China has maintained close communications and coordination with relevant countries, and will continue to play a constructive role in properly resolving the Iranian nuclear issue.

China has taken note of the reports of the Director General of IAEA on the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic. China supports IAEA in the continuation of its work in accordance with its mandate of safeguards, and expects further cooperation between the relevant parties and IAEA.

China is ready to work with the international community to make further efforts and contributions to the achievement of comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East at an early date.